

ASAC Report to the Board

During the 2018-2019 school year the Alternative Schools Advisory Committee (ASAC) held three official meetings, on December 10, January 28, and May 6. ASAC focused on two areas:

1. Looking for opportunities for the Alternative schools to partner
2. ASAC's finances

Opportunities for the Alternative schools to partner

Last school year ASAC had hoped to work together to co-host a parent information evening in November 2018. With the Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants being delayed in the spring of 2018, it was not possible to follow through with this plan for November 2018.

Discussion this school year has been whether an event such as hiring a University of Ottawa speaker is still of interest to the Alternative schools communities and whether such an event is possible to organize. Given the costs of such an event, the ASAC representatives decided to not proceed with booking a speaker at this time.

ASAC's finances

Much to our surprise, ASAC received an email early in the school year from a former Alternative parent, asking what to do with money collected and held by ASAC. This money was outside the OCDSB's allotment to ASAC and was held in a separate bank account. ASAC was not aware of this money or bank account. The money was transferred into ASAC's OCDSB account and the original bank account was closed. All of ASAC's funds are now held in the OCDSB's ASAC account.

ASAC discussed uses for this money, in light of the goal to have the Alternative schools partner on a project. Discussion is ongoing and ASAC hopes to put this money to good use in the 2019-2020 school year.

The Alternative Program in action at the various OCDSB Alternative schools

The Alternative schools each continue to strive to be places of Innovation in learning, with creative and unconventional projects as a way to fully engage students; where children can learn and play Cooperatively (not motivated or defeated by competition); where in and out of class Multi-age groupings allow both opportunities for mentorship, as well as the ability to work ahead or extra time to learn, depending on the student's stage of development; where a Balance between student-directed and teacher-directed learning allows for students to develop responsibility in their own learning, a valuable skill that promotes life-long learning; where Ongoing assessment and self-evaluation emphasizes engaged learning rather than marks; where a Family & community-centered school environment brings strength with additional hands on deck and a variety of skillsets and contributions; and where learning is Integrated between all subjects. Math, language, social studies and all other subjects are not taught in isolated bubbles, but as completely *interconnected*, much like each member of our school communities. There are five Alternative schools in the OCDSB: Summit (Grades 7 and 8), Churchill, Riverview, Lady Evelyn, and Regina (all Grades 1-6).

As part of the discussions in our ASAC meetings, we had the chance to share some of the ways we exhibit the seven Alternative tenets through various activities.

At Lady Evelyn, for example, on a monthly basis a teacher and parent work together at a school assembly to explain one of the Alternative tenets in detail, and engage the students to demonstrate it in action. This helps to keep the strength of the Alternative program alive in learning and play.

Also at Lady Evelyn, parents, teachers and students work together to put on an annual Earth Day event for all ages; with cooperative games and activities; seedlings and birdhouses for sale which are grown and built by students, teachers and families. This event is a great example of an Innovative approach to learning, and how there is an absolute interconnectedness to learning between all subjects such as science, math, art, social studies, language and more, and where this learning can be wholesomely achieved amongst multi-ages and in a school environment that includes not only students and staff, but the broader community and families as well.

2018-2019 marks the second full school year for Regina Street Alternative School, after the merger of Regina Street School and Grant Alternative. The Regina Street Alternative School parents made the following comments regarding what they like best about Regina Street Alternative School:

“Bordenball and basketball tournaments with the other alternative schools...I love the way that the ‘teams’ are a mixture of students from various schools. Hence, our kids get to meet new people.”

“As a parent I love being welcome at school, whether to volunteer for an hour of helping with math or a full-day field trip to Ray’s Reptiles.”

“Scientists in the classroom is always fun, and the trip to the farm with the kinders was a blast.”

“Family Science night was fun.”

“The grade 5 MacSkimming multi day trip...the proceeds of pizza lunches and milk are used to pay for the grade 5 multiday (overnight) trip to the MacSkimming Outdoor Center and the Grade 6 trip too!”

“Mud Lake! What an amazing resource, and the school uses it so well. Each walk to Mud Lake has a purpose. My kid has done everything from math to science to art, all related to trips to Mud Lake. Plus the outdoor time and the physical activity are invaluable.”